

Communicating Change Tool

Practice, Focus, Create!



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Change is inevitable. Communication makes it easier.

Use this tool to help communicate change to your community or whatever you define as your target constituency. In this example, the change has already been determined, though the details may still be under development.

Make the Case: Why is this change happening?

- On half sheets of paper, write in large letters: Capture key words or phrases that describe the reason the change is happening. Words might include: budget challenge/opportunity, people-changes (constituent shifts, demographic influences), new leadership, desire for innovation or new strategies.
- Post the sheets so similar words or concepts are grouped together. See if any key words need to be added.
- Draft a sentence (no more than two) that describe the circumstances in the most positive way possible.

Make it Possible: What gives you hope about the change? Regardless of whether or not the circumstances are serious, challenging or exciting, some may find want to avoid them.

- Continue using the half sheets to draw out input quickly and briefly. Don't dwell on details at this point.
- If response reflect negatively, ask respondent to reframe the concern in the most positive light possible. Don't deny the concern. Just focus on possibilities that will help move forward.
- If there are issues that require new practices or accountability, be transparent about how it's being addressed and will continue to improve.

Make it Real for Me: What's my role? Change is always easier when people see themselves in the new picture. What's the best new role for me, my staff, my team, my partners, or the way I serve the community? What's the community's role? How do we know that? If we don't, how are we going to find out?

- Capture every role that is expected to change. Group like roles together. Give them new headings.
- Connect changing roles to current roles. This might be illustrated in a column comparison format or in a circular graphic, or other format. Ground the change in current comfort zones. Explore how they will fit together.

Make it easy: What's the path? Illustrate the new vision. Define as simply as possible how the change will happen, the timeline, the steps.

Make it strong: What does success look like? Use half sheets again to fill in the rest:

- How will you know when the change is complete?
- How will you know when the change is producing successful results?
- What does "cranking at full speed" look like in the new reality? How does it look from the staff side, the inside? How does it look from the client side? How does it look from the donor or volunteer side?
- How are successes celebrated?

Communicate the Change to the World: Now you're ready to select key messages to communicate the change to each of your constituents. Develop:

- An elevator speech with the most positive and concise message of moving forward.
- A one-page summary showing more detail with illustrations and bullets for easy reading.
- Very short Facebook or other media adaptations, perhaps rolled out in increments: "Change 1 is coming soon!"
- Consider whether there are targeted messages for key partners or client groups.
- Celebrate with the world. Find ways to make the change personal for others. Capture stories.

*"It is not enough to show people how to live better:
there is a mandate for any group with enormous powers of communication to show people how to be better."
~ Marya Mannes, "A Word to the Wizards"*

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